

A VITAL 60th minute goal by Mick Holifield — just when Tooting and Mitcham were threatening to take over the game—put Wycombe Wanderers on the road to the second qualifying round of the F.A. Cup on Saturday, at Sandy Lane.

Although man of the match, Johnny Hutchinson, made it safe for Wycombe with an 88th minute goal, Holifield's brilliant individual effort was far more valuable.

Tooting had come out at the start of the second half looking a much improved outfit. Their early pressure was rewarded with a Trevor Ford goal and for a time they seemed capable of stealing the match from Wycombe's grasp.

But this was Wanderers day. After their recent lack of goals, they equalled their top score of three — their best victory since the opening Isthmian League triumph over Dulwich Hamlet on August 12.

The goals were most welcome. Wycombe at last began to make the most of chances that have been squandered in recent matches.

There is still one offender though — Keith Searle. Although his usual dominant self in the air, Keith has yet to recapture the form that put him on top of the goalscoring charts at Loakes Park last year.

Brian Lee's policy of playing Johnny Hutchinson in a deeper midfield role, paid off handsomely on Saturday. Getting through a tremendous amount of work, "Hutch" emerged as the best player on the park. And his goal — although tinged with fortune — was just reward for a superb individual performance.

Wycombe were faced with a new look Tooting side that had just finished an unbeaten run of six matches with a 2-1 defeat at Walton. Although lacking strike power upfront, they looked a

STUART EARP reports

Tooting & M. 1, Wycombe W. 3

useful outfit and had a real matchwinner in winger Alan Ives.

John Delaney set the pattern for much of the first half when he just failed to get a touch to an early corner, and, after five minutes Searle netted only for the "goal" to be disallowed for off side. Although fading later, Robb Williams had an excellent first half and came within inches of putting Wycombe ahead after seven minutes with a diving header.

It took Tooting ten minutes to get over the early onslaught. But the ever-dangerous Ives almost snatched the lead when he dispossessed Delaney. He saw his lob headed away by Olsen. Two minutes later Olsen did the trick again — foiling Ives' goal-bound drive.

After Keith Searle had turned Pritchard's corner just wide with a flashing header, the England International put the Blues one up with a coolly taken goal.

A long throw by Tony Amos eluded two defenders and the ball rolled towards Pritchard, who calmly slotted it past Dave Cobb.

Wanderers should have pressed home the advantage of their 21st minute goal, but instead allowed Tooting breathing space. Having recovered, they hit back strongly with Maskell coming out bravely to smother

Ford's shot. Ives created the chance and was a constant thorn in the Blues' side.

As against St. Albans last Tuesday, their defensive weakness on the ground was badly exposed. Bearing in mind Delaney was well off colour, they were far too slow to deal with Ives' speed.

But after their recent run of poor results, Wanderers have gone back to the basics. Whereas their football was intricate and complicated last term, they have yet to find that sort of form and are rightly playing the simple ball instead of the ambitious.

It took Tooting just four minutes of the new half to get back on level terms. Before Wycombe had time to get into their stride Doug Francis, who had gone through a nightmare first half, saw his deflected pass go through to Ford. Maskell, off his line like a shot, was left powerless with the inside forward's chipped shot into the corner.

On the hour, Holifield, preferred to Tony Horseman, produced one spark of genius after Ian Rundle sent a high ball upfield. The inside forward nodded the ball on, ran between two defenders and just when he had seemingly taken it too far, pulled it back under the body of Cobb to put Wanderers ahead.

Tooting replied quickly after

the reverse, with Maskell saving well from Cooper's cross and then sprinting off his line to hack a weak back-pass from Williams away to safety.

But the home side's rally was short lived. In a desperate bid to get back on level terms, they became increasingly ragged.

Pushing up more men into Wycombe's half, they left themselves vulnerable to the breakaway. Tony Amos almost capitalised on the situation after 63 minutes when put through by Pritchard but flicked his shot just wide. Tony's snap shot five minutes later went narrowly over the crossbar.

The telling factor in the last quarter was Wycombe's experience. Keeping cool, the Blues never allowed themselves to become flustered. They had seen it all before and weren't about to throw their chance away.

With two minutes to go, Hutchinson made it a matter of time. Goalkeeper Cobb was left with sparse cover as "Hutch" collected possession outside the area and sent in a strong cross-shot. The ball struck Bobby Green and sent Cobb completely the wrong way. Although he recovered well, Cobb couldn't prevent the ball crossing the line.

TOOTING AND MITCHAM — D. Cobb, R. Cooper, K. Sheehan, A. Hill, R. Green, J. Wareing, A. Berredloth, D. Francis, D. Juneman, T. Ford, A. Ives sub: D. Clarke (not used).

WYCOMBE — J. Maskell, I. Rundle, D. Gamblin, G. Olsen, J. Delaney, R. Williams, M. Holifield, L. Pritchard, K. Searle, A. Amos, J. Hutchinson, sub: A. Gane (not used).

Referee: A. H. Baker.
Half-time: 1-0. Goalscorers: Wycombe (60), Hutchinson (88), Tooting — Ford (49).